DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 571 FL 015 133

AUTHOR Brod, Evelyn F.
TITLE Bilingual and Group Poetry in the Foreign Language Classroom.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 12p.; For related documents, see FL 015 131-139.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT OMLTA Journal; p9-19 1985

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities; *Classroom Techniques; Instructional Materials; Language Skills; Literature Appreciation; *Poetry; *Second Language Instruction; Skill Development

ABSTRACT

This article suggests a variety of ancillary activities in which poetry may be introduced into the foreign language classroom to build confidence and have fun in the second language, while practicing and reinforcing important linguistic concepts. The use of topics and themes such as wishes, comparisons, dreams, colors, or metaphors, is recommended. Class collaborative poems, to which each student contributes a line, is noted as a possible group activitiy. Poems from a variety of languages, including Spanish, French, Italian, German, Japanese, are mentioned, and guidelines are given for choosing examples for classroom use. Hints for classroom implementation include emphasizing repetition instead of rhyme in student poetry writing assignments, because rhyme can be difficult for language learners; discouraging undue concern about spelling, grammar, punctuation, and neatness in student poetry writing; having enough copies of each poem for all students; and being aware of the special problems of adolescent students, such as shyness, the literariness of some who write and the hostility of some who don't. A suggested assignment that has been found to be effective is the writing of poems with foreign words in them. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED259571

BILINGUAL AND GROUP POETRY IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Evelyn F. Brod
Raymond Walters College
University of Cincinnati

There are various ancillary activities in which poetry may be introduced into the foreign language classroom to build confidence and have fun in the second language while practicing and reinforcing important linguistic concepts. These exercises enhance the second language experience for both student and teacher, creating an atmosphere of spontaneous excitement and discovery. One of these has been discussed at length in "Concrete Poetry: A Linguistic Technique for the Foreign Language Classroom" (1). Two other poetic techniques that will be discussed and explained in detail here are bilingual and group poetry.

In 1970 Kenneth Koch's book Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry (2) was published. This was followed in 1973 with Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?: Teaching Great Poetry to Children (3), and I Never Told Anybody: Teaching Poetry Writing in a Nursing Home (4) in 1977. All of these contain cleverly detailed means of introducing the writing of poetry into the conventional classroom or in another institutional setting. What follows is an exploration of the ideas contained in Koch's books and some actual classroom experiences with these techniques so that you, the reader, may adapt these concepts as you see fit to your own classroom situations. One can see in the following statement what Koch means and what an added dimension poetry writing can bring to the foreign language classroom:

> What seemed most important was that, of the children I taught, every one had the capacity to write poetry well enough to enjoy it himself and usually well enough to give pleasure to others... Writing poetry makes children feel happy, capable, and creative. It makes them feel more open to understanding and appreciating what others have written (literature). It even makes them want to know how to spell and say things correctly (5).

These goals are, of course, highly desirable in foreign language classes, and this creative way of achieving them can be realized by any foreign language teacher. The exercises may be done with any age group, from kindergarten or first grade through adulthood, as well as in any language.

Topics and Themes

Koch begins by suggesting topics or themes. These include wishes (which may utilize practice of the subjunctive), comparisons (using como in Spanish), dreams, metaphors, I used to/but now (which would lend itself ideally to a review of the imperfect),

FL 015 133

OMLTA Journal; p9-19 1985

9 "PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara Snyder
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

lies, colors (what color is Paris, Berlin, Madrid?), I seem to be/ but really I am, being an animal or a thing, noises, poems written to music (play De Falla, Ravel, or Mozart, for example), the third eye (that between your other two eyes that sees what and when they do not), and class collaborations, or group poems where everybody contributes one line and each line may contain a color, a city or a country, or may begin with "I wish," among others.

In Nursing Home, Koch introduces yet other exercises for poetry topics. These included letter poems, being in the rain, poems about fear, and poems of thanks. Koch also suggests that students look for strange comparisons such as something big to something small, something real to something unreal, something human to something not human. He encourages children to be free and even "crazy" in what they write.

Using examples of great poetry is helpful in order to demonstrate what you want the students to do. Read Lorca's "Romance Sonámbulo" ("Verde que te quiero verde..."), for example, to introduce color poems. You may be rewarded with a poem as enchanting as the bilingual poem that follows. (See Appendix A, p. 18, for translations of vocabulary in the poems that follow.)

I saw a yellow and blue cabeza!
I saw a man and woman amado in red.
I saw a marido in brown.
I saw a green cielo and a Cristo in red.
I saw a man loco in yellow.
I saw a loco man on a green toro.
I saw a big cabeza.
I saw a green and blue cabeza.
I saw a niña in gray.
I saw a ghost in navy blue.

--Gloria Peters (Wishes, p. 284)

In Rose, Where Did You Get that Red?, Koch sets forth a multiplicity of ideas for using great poetry to inspire personal rhyme. He mentions, for example, use of Lorca's "Arbolé, Arbolé" in addition to "Romance Sonámbulo" for its use of color. Poems using colors can be part of or result from an assignment to "use words you would like to use because of what they mean or just because you like the way they look or sound--you don't have to know what they mean" (6). The following student uses colors, the meaning of which he obviously does not know:

As I Sailed
The sea was amarillo
with waves of rojo
the sun azul
And the sky gris
This was all this
As I sailed
In my verde boat.

--Sedley Alpaugh (Rose, p. 175)

Presentation of Rimbaud's "Voyelles" yielded the following harvests in a French class exercise:

> Le grenouille est verte
> Pourquoi?
> Le coq est orange
> Pourquoi?
> Le lapin est brun
> Pourquoi?
> Pourquoi je suis une couleur?
>
> --Stephen Godchaus (Rose, p. 174)

> Le U est orange, il se trouve sur l'eau au couchant.
> The A is chocolate brown and one can always see it
> under the bark of a rotten branch on a pine tree.
> Le E est bleu pâle, and sounds like a breathing cry.
> I is tan, but green; snow in shadow on top of my
> mountain where I found a moldy scarf.
> Le O est bleu--vert comme l'eau, qui scintille en
> tombant éternellement surs les durs rocher froids.
> E is white with empty depth of black; hard sheets
> of ice, shining in the sun.
>
> --Mary L. Bowden (Rose, p. 195)

Koch suggests that Rimbaud's "Fleurs" (Flowers) is also appropriate for use in French, as well as Apollinaire's "Coeur, Couronne et Miroir" (Heart, Crown and Mirror), for example.

Again in French, by using Senghor's "Je veux dire ton nom" (I Want to Say Your Name), for example, students could write a bilingual poem in French and English about a person whose name they like and about all the things the name makes them think of. What color is the name, what time of year does it make you think of, what cities or countries does it call to mind?

Koch also provides suggestions for a number of other languages. Those teaching Italian may use Dante for inspiration. In German, Rilke's "Der Knabe" (The Boy) could suggest writing a bilingual poem about wanting to be strong or important. "Aus einer Kindheit" (From a Childhood) could lead students to writing about a time when they were younger and felt especially close to someone or felt happy about something.

The following Japanese Haiku may suggest water or silence as poetic themes:

> The old pond;
> A frog jumps in
> the sound of the water. (Basho, Rose, p. 312)

> No one spoke
> The host, the guest
> The white chrysanthemums. (Ryota, Rose, p. 313)

For teachers of Chinese, Ch'u Yuan's "In Praise of the Orange Tree" may inspire a bilingual Chinese/English poem about a tree or plant or flower or fruit the student likes. They might be asked to imagine that this plant is a person. Po Chu I's "Eating Bamboo Shoots" may be used to generate an assignment such as the following: "Write a poem about eating or drinking. Think of something you love to eat or drink. Think of everything you like about it--its taste, its smell, the way it feels, the way it looks" (7). This idea may also be adapted to a language other than Chinese if the teacher wishes to find a poem about food in that language.

In general, Koch offers the following statement of guidelines for choosing examples:

> Writing suggestions have been used with teaching poetry before. Those I have seen in textbooks, however, are unhelpful either because they don't give the child enough (Write a poem of your own about a Tiger [after reading Blake's The Tyger to them]), or bad because they give him too much--often, for example, telling him what to feel (Write a poem about How Beautiful You Think Some Animal Is). 'Write a Poem in Which You Imagine Talking to an Animal' is in the right direction, but not dramatic enough. A writing suggestion should help a child to feel excited and to think of things he wants to write (8).

The suggestions mentioned in this article are only some of the myriad possibilities that exist thematically. You have only the many possibilities of your own personal inspiration to take you to the far realms of such invention. Naturally, any of the themes may be used in any foreign language. The examples introduced later will be primarily Spanish, but all second languages are appropriate.

Some Hints on Implementation

Koch asserts that rhyme can be a hindrance when young people write poetry, for it is a difficult task and can often handcuff the freshness of the approach. This caution about rhyme is not to be taken lightly, because, as Koch says:

> Teaching really is not the right word for what takes place: it is more like permiting the children to discover something they already have. I helped them to do this by removing obstacles, such as the need to rhyme, and by encouraging them in various ways to get tuned in to their own strong feelings, to their spontaneity, their sensitivity, and their carefree inventiveness (9).

Koch believes that repetition can replace rhyme. An example of this is shown in the following poem.

My Rockets in the Azul Space
I like to take rockets into the azul space.
I like to pay the luna a visit.
I also like to have tea with estrellas.
But most of all I like when the stars
have felicidad parties at noche.
--Leonora Calanni (Wishes, p. 296)

In this poem, repetition of "I like" is used to replace rhyme, and one result is a delightfully ingenuous scene created by a tea party with the stars. Even though such poetry may be prosaic and "talky," the details and the innovative images create a truly positive effect.

Koch encourages children to be free in what they write and suggests that they not worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation, or neatness, for these can create barriers to the free flow of ideas and can be easily attended to after the poem is written. In addition, Koch suggests that teachers not correct, not criticize, not single out one or two poems as the best, and, above all, not analyze the poem as reflecting the student's personal problems. If poems are read aloud, everyone's should be read every so often.

If you use great poetry as examples for assignments, take enough copies of the poems to pass out to everyone. After students have read them, explain unclear sections, discuss the poem, and then have students write their own poems. If you write in class, do so for fifteen or twenty minutes, collect the poems and read them aloud, then mimeograph the poems and distribute copies to each student. By no means give quizzes or tests on poetry done in this manner, for it makes of poetry an enemy.

In working at the high school level with adolescents Koch realizes that there are special problems with adolescent students. He mentions shyness, the literariness of some who write, and the aggression and contempt of some who won't, but he believes that a teacher who knows students that age and who can be enthusiastic and, at the same time, free and easy with them about poetry should be able to teach it very well.

Koch points out that students seem to enjoy writing at school more than at home, for at school, where they are all together, there is a "lovely chaos" (10) as he puts it. You, the teacher, must decide what format for writing you find most appealing and if you can weather a lovely chaos once in a while in your classroom.

Bilingual poetry

One specific assignment that works well is the use of foreign words in the poem. Even though we may not understand the second language in which the bilingual poem is written, a certain magic pervades the experience, as this poem from Swaziland using siSwati words indicates:

> ...I wonder why the grass is luhlata
> and why the bomvu wind is never seen.
> Who taught the mnyama necked bird to build a nest,
> And the bomvu, luhiata trees to stand still and rest...
> --The Students of St. Mary's Secondary School
> (Rose, p. 354)

Koch devotes an entire chapter of Wishes, Lies, and Dreams to bilingual poems.

> I thought their knowledge of a second language was clearly an advantage, and I wanted them to know it. They liked using Spanish, and they also enjoyed translating for me when I didn't know whst they had written. The mere fact that a word or phrase was in Spanish made it interesting and amusing to them. They all spoke English, but English was the language of school, whereas Spanish was a kind of secret (11).

To use a second language in their poetry he asked the students to:

> close their eyes and listen while I said 'night' and then 'la noche.' I asked them what color each word was, and which was darker. (La noche turned out to be darker and more purple.) I did the same for sky and cielo, and for star and estrella. This helped them, I think, to get a sensuous sense of the Spanish words as well as of the English ones and make them eager to use them in what they wrote (12).

One of the students was inspired to write the following:

> In invierno the sky is azul.
> And in verano the cielo is light blue...
> --Esther García (Wishes, p. 45)

The internal rhyme of "in invierno" is something uniquely wonderful when caputred by the bilingual net!

One more example of bilingual poetry will demonstrate its richness and vitality. Koch chose twenty Spanish words in advance, wrote them on the board, and asked students to include them in a poem:

> The León in Invierno
> One invierno a león came to the nieve bosque.
> And walked in the bosque and his garra was in the
> deep la paloma white nieve.
> The trees had like white nieve platos on the branch.
> And it was Navidad la noche and the violeto cielo
> was full of baile estrellas.
> --Ilona Baburka (Wishes, p. 288)

Collaborative Poems

Collaborative poems, or group poems. are poems written by a number of people. These may be small groups of four to six students, or may be composed of the entire class. Each individual contributes one line of verse until all have participated. A title may be chosen, and the verses left in arbitrary order, or they may be reordered for logistic purposes.

Koch indicates that some children who have difficulty in writing collaborative poems may be shy. They have often been corrected and criticized rather than praised. Obviously it is much more fun to talk and contribute if your ideas are accepted, so, for example, whenever something is imaginative or funny, it should be acknowledged and any mistakes ignored. It is especially important to keep this in mind when students are creating a group poem.

Essentially, Koch's technique for collaborative poems is to do them orally with from six to fifteen students seated around a table or with chairs in a circle. The teacher proposes a theme such as wishes or lies, and students make up lines that are transcribed by the teacher. When students feel that the poem is complete, they stop and the teacher reads their lines aloud. Koch believes that this oral method is preferable to tape recording, for the time element allows more creativity. Timid students are aided by braver ones, and some ideas, too good to belong to any one child, are transformed, elaborated on, and topped. He cites the following example:

> I wish I was an apple
> I wish I was a steel apple
> I wish I was a steel apple so when
> people bit me their teeth would fall out...
> (Wishes, p. 48)

Sometimes after writing the separate lines, Koch would shuffle them and thence create the group collaboration. Koch believes that such collaborations are a good way to begin because they take pressure off individuals and encourage brief and spontaneous contributions. Collaborating also creates a slightly festive atmosphere that is in some respects like a party game. Everyone contributes sentences, then hears the surprising results.

Collaborative poetry is not new. According to Koch, collaborative poems are an old literary tradition. Linked verse was the major form of Japanese poetry for centuries, and poets wrote together in ancient China and in medieval Provence.

Teaching Collaborative and Bilingual Poetry

If there are problems teaching poetry at the high school level, imagine the resistance encountered from post adolescents and adults! This writer, however, has taught bilingual poetry and used

collaborative techniques successfully at the university level. To prepare the class to write bilingual poems, some examples from Koch's Wishes, Lies and Dreams were read to the class. An entire class was devoted to this preparation. Simile and metaphor were explained in simple terms, as Koch suggests, to take the mistique out of writing poetry, and the assignment was made to write a bilingual poem on any topic of the student's own choosing using any vocabulary. This was done because only one more class period could be dedicated to this activity. The many possible themes cited earlier in the paper were touched upon, and examples were given for each. The students returned to the next class with their efforts. We sat in a circle, as is our custom, and read the poems to each other. The instructor also participated. At the end of the hour, the poems were collected to be mimeographed and redistributed in booklet form. The creativity was outstanding. College students hunger to express themselves artistically and to "become children again" as a relaxation from all the heady coursework. Imagine the pride involved in writing a poem for Spanish class!

During the final quarter in the Spring, a class collaboration was done. The lines were written on the board by students, one by one, and the level of energy in the classroom was very high. This is a bit of a change from the way Koch recommends doing this. It was, however, found to be equally successful. The class collaboration can be written down by a student, given to the teacher, copies made and distributed for all. One might imagine that a tape recorder could also work quite well with each student reciting one line of the poem into the tape and then playing it back to hear the final version.

The following bilingual poems are examples of those created by faculty and students in college Elementary Spanish classes.

El sol and the mar
El sol begins by warming the playas and the aire.
Then it beckons to the gente - 'come recline in my warmth'

On the playas of blanco sand, the gente
Come to be tostado by el sol.
Their bodies turn negro and they laugh.

The mar beckons también.
She sparkes like the estrella and glistens seductively.
The agua is fresca and clean.

The gente go nadar and are rocked and swayed,
As the leaves of a palm árbol in the wind.
They are refresco.

As they tire in their partido, el sol drops down
dormir y the mar se calma.
They will play the partido again mañana. --Lynn Myers

Note the inventive and probably unconscious bilingual alliteration ("drops down dormir") in the first and second lines as well as the last line ("play the partido") of this poem.

Cycle Eterno
Primavera - birth
Verano - youth
Otoño - solitude
Invierno - death
Primavera - rebirth
--Elena Klotz

En the aquario
del Padre
hay many peces
each
with
su propio pescador.
--Evelyn F. Brod

Luego y Ahora

I used to
climb árboles
cut out paper dolls
mirar the nubes
blow up balloons
practice my lecciones de baile
watch Howdy Doody
and pasar días de verano in the hammock...

I never used to worry about
pollution
pagando the rent
the population explosion
exámenes
inflation
trabajando
the oil crisis and

grey pelos...
...but now I do.

I never appreciated being a niña...until I grew up.
--Cathy Wheeler

Daydream
Había nuevas nubes en el cielo
As I began to walk
En los bosques hacía fresco
As I slept upon the moss.

Hacía sol
When I awoke
¿Qué hora era?
Reality. --Linda Worley

The following poem was accompanied by xeroxed photographs of the beloved friend in question (a Bassett hound). It reaches the heights of glory of multilingual poetry by using English, French, German, Latin and Spanish all in one poem. Its theme is love.

A Poeme de mein Amigo

Yo tengo un perro
Son nom est Pluto
Er ist ein animal
Mit un mal bent foot-o.

Il est un chien
De la especie Bassett
A pesar de son pícaro
Personalité, er has it!

Mon ami est très, très gros
Avec les yeux tristes.
Tiene las oreilles longs
Decir the very leastes.

Er ist ein alte Hunde
Que hat siempre sueño
Aunque él parece stumm,
Il est muchísimo el dueño.

Il est chassé les lapins
Cuando él era jeune
Nunc il marche lentement
Y vuelve a casa soon.

Es un bon mimado
Quelquefois je pense qu'il est fou
pero, no matter what il fait
Eum amo très beaucoup.

--Anne Nethercott

Conclusion

These poems demonstrate what successful ancillary techniques bilingual and collaborative poetry can be in the foreign language classroom. They can be used to increase vocabulary, review grammar, enhance usage, and to build self-esteem in the foreign language. They can, as well, create a relaxed atmosphere among students and teachers where innermost thoughts can be shared, where laughter and inventiveness can lead to a prideful accomplishment in a language not one's own. In short, bilingual and group poetry have the positive result of letting one learn more about a second language and have fun all at the same time!

Appendix A: Translation of vocabulary used in poems

My Rockets in the Azul Space: azul-blue; luna-moon; estrellas-stars; felicidad-happiness. I saw a yellow and blue cabeza!: cabeza-head; amado-loved (for in love); marido-husband; cielo-sky; Cristo-Christ; loco-crazy; toro- bull; niña-little girl. As I Sailed: amarillo-yellow; rojo-red; azul-blue; gris-gray; verde-green. Le grenouille est verte: le-the; grenouille-frog; est-is; verte-green; Pourquoi-Why; coq-cock, rooster; lapin-rabbit; brun-brown; je suis une-I am a; couleur-color. Le U est orange: est-is; il se trouve-it is found; sur l'eau-on the water; au couchant-at sunset; bleu pâle-light blue; vert-green; comme-like; qui-which; scintille en-shines on; tombant-falling; éternellement-eternally; surs-on; durs-hard; rocher-rock; froids-cold. In invierno the sky is azul: invierno-winter; azul-blue; verano-summer; cielo-sky. The León in Invierno: león-lion; invierno-winter; nieve-snow (for snowy); bosque-forest, woods; garra-paw; la paloma-the dove; platos-plates; Navidad-Christmas; la noche-the night; violeto-violet; cielo-sky; baile-dance (for dancing); estrellas-stars. El sol and the mar: El sol-the sun; playas-beaches; aire-air; gente-people; blanco-white; tostado-suntanned; negro-black; mar-sea;

también-also; estrella-star; agua-water; fresca-fresh; nadar-swim; árbol-tree; refresco-refreshed; partido-game; dormir-to sleep; y-and; se calma-becomes calm; mañana-tomorrow. Cyclo Eterno: primavera-spring; verano-summer; otoño-autumn; invierno-winter. En the aquario: aquario-aquarium, del Padre-of God; hay-there are; peces-fish; su propio-its own; pescador-fisherman. Luego y Ahora: luego-then; y-and; ahora-now; mirar-to look; nubes-clouds; lecciones-lessons; baile-dance; pasar-to spend; días de verano-summer days; pagando-paying; exámenes-exams; trabajando-working; pelos-hairs; niña-little girl. Daydream: había-there were; nuevas-new; nubes-clouds; en el cielo-in the sky; en los bosques-in the woods; hacía fresco-it was cool; hacía sol-it was sunny; ¿Qué hora era?-What time was it? A Poème de mein Amico: poème-poem; mein-my; amico-friend; yo tengo un perro-I have a dog; Son nom est-his name is; Er ist ein-he is a; mit-with; Il est un chien-he is a dog; de la especie-of the kind; a pesar de-in spite of; son-(being); pícaro-rascal; personalité-personality; er-he; mon ami-my friend; tres gros-very fat; avec les yeux-with eyes; tristes-sad; tiene-he has; oreilles-ears; decir-to say; er ist ein alte Hunde-he is an old dog; que hat-that has; siempre-always; sueño-sleepy; aunque él parece-although he seems; stümm-silent, dumb; muchísimo-very much; el dueño-the owner; chassé-chased; lapins-rabbits; cuando él era-when he was; jeune-young; nunc-now; il marche-he walks; lentement-slowly; y vuelve a casa-and returns home; bon-good; mimado-pet, spoiled; quelquefois-sometimes; je pense qu'il est fou-I think that he is crazy; pero-but; il fait-he does; eum amo-I love him; très beaucoup-very much

Notes

1 Evelyn F. Brod, "Concrete Poetry: A Linguistic Technique for the Foreign Language Classroom, Foreign Language Annals 16, 4 (September 1983), 255-258.

2 Kenneth Koch, Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1970). (Also referred to as Wishes, Lies and Dreams and Wishes.)

3 Kenneth Koch, Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?: Teaching Great Poetry to Children (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1973). (Also referred to as Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? and Rose.)

4 Kenneth Koch, I Never Told Anybody: Teaching Poetry Writing in a Nursing Home (New York: Random House, 1977). (Also referred to as Nursing Home.)

5 Wishes, p. 53

6 Rose, pp. 163-164

7 Rose, p. 308

8 Rose, p. 17

9 Wishes, pp. 24-35

10 Wishes, p. 29

11 Wishes, pp. 50-51

12 Wishes, p. 45